Damselfly groups



American Rubyspot



Boreal Bluet "wheel"



Plains Forktail



Great Spreadwing

Checklist of Common Damselflies

Broad-winged damsels
American Rubyspot

Spreadwings

- __ Great Spreadwing
- Spotted Spreadwing
- _ Northern Spreadwing

Pond damsels

- _ Taiga Bluet
- __ Northern Bluet
- _ Double-striped Bluet
- Boreal Bluet
- __ Tule Bluet
- __ Familiar Bluet
- __ Arroyo Bluet
- __ Rainbow Bluet
- __ Orange Bluet
- __ Plains Forktail
- Western Forktail
- __ Vivid dancer
- __ Western Red Damsel

Hint: Spreadwings hold their wings ~ 45 degrees to the sides of the body. Bluets hold their wings parallel to their bodies. Dancers hold their wings raised slightly over their abdomens.

Resources

Books

Wild Guide: Dragonflies, Cynthia Berger Dragonflies of the Southwest, Kathy Biggs

Dragonflies of the Colorado Front Range: A Photographic

Guide, Ann Cooper

Dragonflies Q&A Guide: Fascinating Facts About Their Life
In the Wild. Ann Cooper

Dragonflies and Damselflies of the Rocky Mountains, Robert DuBois

Dragonflies and Damselflies of the West, Dennis Paulson

Websites & App

<u>http://www.boulderaudubon.org/dragonflies.htm</u> — for common local species

<u>http://www.odonatacentral.org/</u> — for state– and country-wide information

http://www.migratorydragonflypartnership.org — dedicated to understanding and conserving dragonfly migration

<u>Dragonfly ID</u> (available from the Apple Store) — check what species have been reported from an area you are exploring.



Dragonflies and damselflies have exoskeletons and must shed to grow. They do this many times as larvae in the water. The final molt (shedding) happens when water-based larvae crawl out onto a stem, twig or rock, split out of their tootight shells, and become flying adults. It takes a while for them to become strong fliers and newly-hatched "tenerals" are fragile and vulnerable—easy prey.

Look for dragonfly and damselfly hatch cases on cattails, twigs, handy trees, (even boardwalks and piers at fishing ponds).



Common Dragonflies



Dragonflies and damselflies are insects in the order Odonata, or "toothed ones." They are fierce predators, both as larvae growing in the water and adults after they emerge. They are told apart by these features:

Dragonflies

Sturdy, strong fliers

Perch with wings out to side (see picture above)

Front and hind wings a different shape

Eyes touch, or nearly touch, at top of head

<u>Damselflies</u>

Delicate, weak fliers

Perch with wings folded over abdomen

Front and hind wings the same shape

Eyes separated by gap— a "dumbbell" look



"Toothed ones" - the jaws of a dragonfly larva!

Dragonfly groups

Darners . . . strong fliers that rarely perch



In a "mating wheel, a male clasps the female's head with tip of his abdomen while the female reaches with her abdomen to collect sperm from underneath his second segment. This leads to the heart-shaped arrangement seen to the left.

Paddle-tailed Darners in a "wheel"

Many species stay attached, or "in tandem," with the male guarding his mate while she lays eggs. This is one way he ensures the offspring are really his!

Common Green Darners "in tandem"



Clubtails . . .



Pale Snaketail

Emeralds . . .



Dot-winged Baskettail

Checklist of Common Dragonflies

Darners

- __ Variable Darner
- Paddle-tailed Darner
- Shadow Darner
- Blue-eyed Darner
- _ Common Green Darner

Clubtails

- __ Pale Snaketail
- _ Sulphur-tipped Clubtail
- Horned Clubtail

Emeralds

- __ Dot-winged Baskettail
- American Emerald
- Mountain Emerald

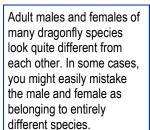
Skimmers

- Calico Pennant
- __ Halloween Pennant Western Pondhawk
- Eastern Pondhawk
- __ Eastern Pondhawk
 Dot-tailed Whiteface
- Widow Skimmer
- Twelve-spotted Skimmer
- Four-spotted Skimmer
- Blue Dasher
- Eastern Amberwing
- __ Common Whitetail
- _ Variegated Meadowhawk
- White-faced Meadowhawk
 Striped Meadowhawk
- _ Striped Meadownawk
 Band-winged Meadowhawk
- __ Autumn Meadowhawk
- Wandering Glider
- __ Black Saddlebags

.... mostly perchers and easier to watch!



Halloween Pennants



Immature males often show female coloring. And both sexes take a while after hatching to develop their fully-adult colors. It is not surprising that identification is a challenge.

One way to learn the malefemale color differences is to watch mating or laying pairs—wheels and tandems—to see which males and females belong together.



Widow Skimmer male



Common Whitetail male



Blue Dasher male



Eastern Amberwing male

These species are a few, but not all, of the species of dragonfly that you may see in Boulder County.

Check the Resources section for books that will help identify other species that make their home here.



Western Pondhawk (F & M)



Four-spotted Skimmer



Autumn Meadowhawks



Black Saddlebags